

The Benefits of Receiving Gratitude for Helpers: A Daily Investigation of Proactive and Reactive Helping at Work

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Although gratitude is a key phenomenon that bridges helping with its outcomes, how and why helping relates to receipt of gratitude and its relation with helper's eudaimonic well-being have unfortunately been overlooked in organizational research. The purpose of this study is to unravel how helpers successfully connect to others and their work via receipt of gratitude. To do so, we distinguish different circumstances of helping—reactive helping (i.e., providing help when requested) versus proactive helping (i.e., providing help without being asked)—and examine their unique effect on the gratitude received by helpers, which, in turn, has downstream implications for helpers' perceived prosocial impact and work engagement the following day. Using daily experience sampling (Study 1) and critical incident (Study 2) methods, we found that reactive helping is more likely to be linked to receipt of gratitude than proactive helping. Receipt of gratitude, in turn, is associated with increases in perceived prosocial impact and work engagement the following day. Our study contributes to the helping literature by identifying receipt of gratitude as a novel mechanism that links helping to helper well-being, by distinguishing proactive and reactive helping, and by highlighting eudaimonic well-being as an outcome of helping for helpers.

Keywords: gratitude, proactive and reactive helping, prosocial impact, work engagement

"The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated"

—William James

Helping coworkers is omnipresent in organizational life as many employees provide and receive help as part of their everyday work experience. Accordingly, helping coworkers has the potential to influence daily functioning of employees, not only for the help

recipients but also for helpers themselves. Importantly, gratitude, "a feeling of appreciation in response to an experience that is beneficial to, but not attributable to, the self" (Fehr, Fulmer, Awtrey, & Miller, 2017, p. 363), is an integral component to helping exchanges because it is inherently relational and activated in benevolent exchanges where individuals provide assistance to one another (Lawler, 2001; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001; Watkins, 2014). During a helping exchange, helpers receive varying levels of gratitude from the recipients, which is communicated via facial, vocal, and postural channels (Bolino, Harvey, & Bachrach, 2012; Lawler, 2001; Sonnentag & Grant, 2012). Humans are hardwired for navigating social interactions by interpreting others' responses, which in turn affect their own well-being (Algoe, Fredrickson, & Gable, 2013; Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Thus, helpers' receipt of gratitude can be powerful force for helpers' well-being.

The aim of our research is to understand *how* daily helping impacts helpers through receipt of gratitude. Despite the potency of receipt of gratitude for helpers' well-being, helper-centric research to date has mostly focused on how the helping action itself directly impacts helpers without consideration of help recipients and their reactions (e.g., Bolino & Turnley, 2005; Gabriel, Koopman, Rosen, & Johnson, 2018; Glomb, Bhawe, Miner, & Wall, 2011; Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott, 2016). Yet how recipients react likely has implications for helpers' well-being, especially given the social nature of helping exchanges. Gratitude is of paramount

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importance as a help recipient reaction because it is a fundamental resource for promoting individual well-being (Lambert, Graham, & Fincham, 2009; Watkins, 2014). The power of gratitude for human experience has long been acknowledged in philosophy, theology, and the positive psychology literature (Algoe et al., 2013; Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Williams & Bartlett, 2015; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010), and social consequences for those who receive gratitude have been documented (Algoe et al., 2013; Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008).

Receipt of gratitude as a focal mechanism through which helping impacts helpers provides novel insights into understanding the consequences of helping for helpers. To begin, our consideration of receipt of gratitude as a key factor for helpers' well-being highlights the social context where helping exchanges take place because not all circumstances of help will elicit gratitude. The conventional view is that recipients express gratitude toward benefactors' voluntary, prosocial initiatives to benefit others (e.g., Grant & Gino, 2010; Tsang, 2007). However, our distinction of different circumstances in which helping occurs suggests a reconsideration of proactive behaviors in the workplace because of possible disadvantages in receiving gratitude. One crucial distinction of such circumstances is proactive helping (i.e., providing help without being asked) and reactive helping (i.e., providing help in response to a specific request; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Spitzmuller & Van Dyne, 2013). We suggest that proactive helping has the potential to undermine helpers' receipt of gratitude because such help may be perceived by recipients as an interruption or ego threat. In contrast, reactive helping may garner more gratitude from recipients because it is enacted in response to a clear desire for assistance. Thus, we propose that helpers are best positioned to reap the well-being benefits of receipt of gratitude by being reactive to help requests.

Moreover, we expand the nomological network of the consequences of helping for helpers by adopting a eudaimonic perspective of the consequences of receipt of gratitude. This perspective emphasizes individuals' experiences that foster genuine positive relations with others and help employees fully function at work (Kashdan, Uswatte, & Julian, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Receipt of gratitude communicates to helpers that they had meaningful interactions with others, which satisfies

their fundamental human needs for competence and relatedness, which are the basis for employee flourishing (Kashdan et al., 2006; Ryan et al., 2008). Employee flourishing means living within an optimal range of human functioning socially and psychologically at work (Colbert, Bono, & Purvanova, 2016; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Keyes & Haidt, 2003). We identify two outcomes—prosocial impact and work engagement—as relevant indicators of flourishing in the social and achievement domains, respectively, at work. Perceived prosocial impact (i.e., “the experience of making a positive difference in the lives of others through one’s work;” Bolino & Grant, 2016, p. 599) signals the presence of genuine positive relations with others (Grant et al., 2007). Work engagement (i.e., “the simultaneous investment of an individual’s physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance;” Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010, p. 619) represents the full investment of employees’ selves into their work (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). As an alternative route to individual well-being (Ryan et al., 2008), a eudaimonic perspective of helping provides further insights to a literature in which most studies have focused on hedonic aspects of well-being. For example, prior research tends to emphasize the benefits for helpers using hedonic descriptions such as “doing good, feeling good” (Glomb et al., 2011), “doing good buffers against feeling bad” (Grant & Sonnentag, 2010), and “altruism as hedonism” (Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976). All told, our research contributes to the helping literature by (a) identifying receipt of gratitude as a novel mechanism for the link between helping and well-being, (b) distinguishing circumstances of helping (i.e., proactive and reactive) that have unique implications for gratitude and subsequent well-being, and (c) broadening the nomological network of outcomes for helpers to include eudaimonic well-being. Our conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

Helping and the Receipt of Gratitude

Despite the burgeoning research on well-being outcomes for helpers, the role of recipients' responses and how those responses impact helpers require further attention. Helping does not occur in a social vacuum; rather, it involves interactions between coworkers through which helpers attend to social cues from recipients. One

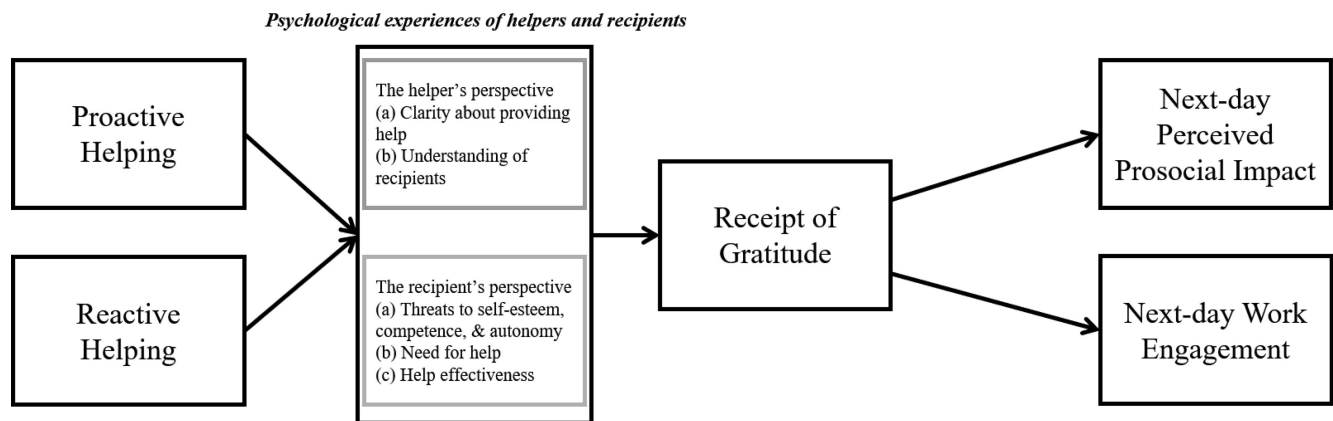


Figure 1. Conceptual model of this study. Psychological mechanisms of the link between the two different circumstances of helping and receipt of gratitude are tested in Study 2.

key component of helping exchanges with implications for helpers' eudaimonic well-being is the receipt of gratitude (Sonnentag & Grant, 2012). Whereas gratitude is recipients' experience of feeling grateful about a benefit from a helper (Lambert & Fincham, 2011), receipt of gratitude indicates helpers' experience that the recipients express a feeling of thankfulness directed toward helpers' provision of help, which is communicated via facial, vocal, and postural channels (Algoe et al., 2013; Grant & Gino, 2010; Williams & Bartlett, 2015). Employees provide and receive help on a day-to-day basis (Glomb et al., 2011; Koopman et al., 2016) and during a helping exchange, helpers receive varying levels of gratitude from the recipients because recipients do not always respond to the provision of help favorably (Chou & Chang, 2017; Deelstra et al., 2003). For example, employees may offer advice or give help to those who are dealing with complex issues and overburdened. However, recipients may wish to solve their problems on their own. Recipients may perceive the offered help as self-threatening and may even feel a sense of incompetence and loss of self-esteem and autonomy, thereby expressing varying levels of gratitude (Peeters, Buunk, & Schaufeli, 1995). Thus, helpers' receipt of gratitude associated with their daily provision of help can also vary daily.

A eudaimonic perspective of well-being identifies satisfaction of human psychological needs for competence and relatedness as key resources for individual well-being (Ryan et al., 2008). For example, a large body of work in psychology suggests that feelings of personal competence and connectedness to others consist of basic human motivation (e.g., Grant & Gino, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, behaving in ways that satisfy basic psychological needs (e.g., giving help and receiving gratitude) can potentially improve individual well-being. For example, receipt of gratitude is a salient form of positive social exchange from which helpers infer the usefulness and impact of their help (Bolino et al., 2012; Sonnentag & Grant, 2012). Receipt of gratitude signals to helpers that they had success in making a difference in others' lives, thereby satisfying individuals' need for competence (Grant & Gino, 2010). Also, helpers' receipt of gratitude fosters genuine positive relations with others and confers a sense of belongingness, thereby helping to satisfy individuals' need for relatedness (Algoe et al., 2013). Thus, as a social cue, receiving gratitude has the potential to fulfill helpers' fundamental needs and create favorable experiences for helpers (Grant & Gino, 2010; Grant et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2009; Watkins, 2014; Wood et al., 2010). Although people often find meaning in their work and gain resources in task and social domains through positive interactions with others, such as giving help and receiving gratitude (Grant & Gino, 2010; Kashdan et al., 2006; Lilius, 2012), how and why helping relates to receipt of gratitude and its impact on helper's well-being have regrettably been overlooked (Algoe et al., 2008; Fehr et al., 2017; Spence, Brown, Keeping, & Lian, 2014).

Notably, gratitude is largely influenced by the social context where helping exchanges take place and not all instances of help necessarily lead to receipt of gratitude (Algoe, Gable, & Maisel, 2010). Thus, it is worthwhile to uncover circumstances in which help is more likely to elicit gratitude and in turn shaping helpers' eudaimonic well-being. As we detail later, the circumstances surrounding help (i.e., whether help is requested or not) determine not only helpers' levels of understanding of helping issues but also recipients' sense of self-esteem, competence, and autonomy, all of

which have implications for helpers' receipt of gratitude and well-being.

Receipt of Gratitude in Response to Proactive and Reactive Helping

Research on helping predominantly considers helping universally beneficial for recipients regardless of the circumstances surrounding the help (Harvey, Bolino, & Kelemen, 2018; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Because of its presumed positive impact, significant effort has been devoted to identifying potential drivers of helping while overlooking possible differences in how helping is enacted under different circumstances. One important distinction is whether helping is proactive or reactive. *Proactive helping* refers to providing help without being asked, whereas *reactive helping* refers to helping others in response to a request for assistance (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Advocates for this distinction suggest that it has implications for improving our understanding of the consequences of helping, and thus have called for empirical investigations of proactive and reactive helping (e.g., Bolino & Grant, 2016; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Spitzmuller & Van Dyne, 2013).

There are a few reasons why proactive helping may reduce receipt of gratitude. From a helper's perspective, helpers may not have a good understanding of recipients' needs, problems, and issues. This is because proactive helping is presumptive in nature in that helpers subjectively judge that recipients require help. This judgment is not always accurate because of cognitive biases such as projection, stereotyping, and selective perception. In fact, providing help without a proper understanding of the recipient's situation can create unfavorable experiences (Chou & Chang, 2017; Deelstra et al., 2003). From a recipient's perspective, this lack of understanding may lead recipients to perceive the offered help less effective and necessary. More importantly, proactive helping may hamper recipients' sense of competence, self-esteem, and autonomy. First, even in situations where recipients' struggles might be easily resolved with help from others, recipients may not accept help because they desire to tackle problems on their own to bolster their sense of personal mastery and competence (Butler, 1998). Second, recipients may perceive the intrusive nature of proactive helping as a threat to their self-esteem because it exposes weaknesses and signals inferiority relative to helpers (Newsom & Schulz, 1998). Finally, receipt of proactive helping can also impede recipients' sense of personal control by taking choices and actions out of their hands, including when and where they are helped and for what and from whom they receive help (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010).

In line with these ideas, research has found that helping others without being requested can lead recipients to feel incompetent, dependent, vulnerable, and embarrassed (e.g., Chou & Chang, 2017; Deelstra et al., 2003; Dunbar, Ford, & Hunt, 1998; Fisher, Nadler, & Whitcher-Alagna, 1982; Graham & Barker, 1990; Halabi, Nadler, & Dovidio, 2011; Nadler & Fisher, 1986; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Thus, proactive helping may undermine favorable responses (Bolino, Turnley, & Niehoff, 2004; Deelstra et al., 2003; Fisher et al., 1982), thereby reducing helpers' receipt of gratitude.

Hypothesis 1: Proactive helping will be negatively related to helpers' receipt of gratitude.

Reactive helping, in contrast, is a sit-back-and-wait approach whereby helpers provide assistance only when explicit requests for help are made. There are a few reasons why such help, which is less presumptive compared with proactive help (Halabi et al., 2011), is likely to engender receipt of gratitude. From a helper's perspective, helpers are likely to have a well-developed understanding of the type of assistance that is required because those who ask for help have already identified the problem or issue at hand. Accordingly, the assistance provided via reactive helping is likely to be more effective compared with proactive helping.

From a recipient's perspective, reactive helping is less likely to lead help recipients to feel threats to their competence, self-esteem, and autonomy. The fact that they ask for help reflects a clear desire and openness to be helped and to implement helpers' suggestions to improve their situation (Clary & Orenstein, 1991; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). Moreover, they likely seek help from people they are comfortable interacting with and who are knowledgeable regarding the problem at hand (Pescosolido, 1992). Given recipients' openness to receiving help, willingness to use the help, and greater control over when, where, for what, and by whom they receive help, reactive helping is less likely to threaten recipients. As such, reactive helping will be favorably accepted and appreciated by recipients, and viewed as more needed and effective than proactive helping. Indeed, recipients report more positive affect, gratitude, and greater liking for helpers when their needs and problems are better understood by helpers (Algoe et al., 2008; DePaulo, Brittingham, & Kaiser, 1983). Taken together, reactive helping is likely to engender gratitude from recipients.

Hypothesis 2: Reactive helping will be positively related to helpers' receipt of gratitude.

Relations of Receipt of Gratitude With Helpers' Eudaimonic Well-Being

The potency of gratitude for human flourishing has long been identified in the literature (Algoe et al., 2013; Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Williams & Bartlett, 2015; Wood et al., 2010). The receipt of gratitude in response to helping behavior is important to helpers' eudaimonic well-being. eudaimonic well-being has unique characteristics for helpers that extend beyond hedonic well-being (e.g., positive mood and job satisfaction). According to Ryan and colleagues (2008, p. 140), "eudaimonic conceptions focus on the content of one's life, and the processes involved in living well, whereas hedonic conceptions of well-being focus on a specific outcome, namely the attainment of positive affect and an absence of pain." Whereas hedonic well-being focuses on the state of *happiness* as the end goal, eudaimonic well-being focuses on the experience of *flourishing* by fully engaging in meaningful actions regardless of subjective experiences that accompany it (Meyer & Maltin, 2010; Waterman et al., 2010). Flourishing occurs when individuals are functioning well psychologically and socially (Colbert et al., 2016; Keyes, 2003). Perceived prosocial impact and work engagement reflect more than the presence of happiness or the absence of strain as both are aligned with positive experiences of human flourishing at work (Grant, 2012; Meyer & Maltin, 2010). We therefore examine perceived prosocial impact as an indicator of a helper's meaningful connection with others and work engagement as an indicator of a

helper's "holistic investment of the entire self" at work (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011, p. 77). The importance of these two outcomes for productivity, wellness, and positive relationships at work is well documented (Christian et al., 2011; Grant, 2008a, 2012; Grant et al., 2007; Matta, Scott, Koopman, & Conlon, 2015; Rich et al., 2010).

Note that we examine delayed effects of receipt of gratitude on next-day perceived prosocial impact and work engagement. This is consistent with research showing that the benefits of positive work exchanges are often not realized immediately (Sonnentag & Grant, 2012), instead having delayed effects that emerge the next day (Lanaj, Johnson, & Lee, 2016; Lin, Ma, & Johnson, 2016; Nicholson & Griffin, 2015; Wang et al., 2013). Investigations of helping at the day level generally focus on more immediate hedonic outcomes (e.g., mood, satisfaction) that occur the same day (e.g., Glomb et al., 2011; Koopman et al., 2016), yet employees may not instantly realize the psychological implications of what happened during the day, particularly in complex or busy jobs. Rather, they may need an incubation period to fully process positive events of receiving gratitude and to become aware of how much they benefitted others (Sonnentag & Grant, 2012). Furthermore, research has established that a period of sleep helps consolidate memory by gaining further understanding of what was learned and experienced during the day (Fenn & Hambrick, 2013; Karni, Tanne, Rubenstein, Askenasy, & Sagi, 1994). Thus, we move beyond current-day hedonic consequences of helping for helpers by investigating its next-day effects on helpers' eudaimonic well-being.

Receipt of gratitude and prosocial impact. We posit that receipt of gratitude explains how helping shapes helpers' perceived prosocial impact, which refers to "the realization or recognition that one's efforts at work are indeed making a difference to someone" (Bolino & Grant, 2016, p. 602). Indeed, receipt of gratitude provides concrete evidence that the helpers' actions made a positive difference in others' lives (Grant & Sonnentag, 2010). Recipients' reactions to the provision of help play a key role in shaping helpers' perceptions of the situation and interpretations of their own actions because the perceived reality of individuals is, in large part, socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Research finds that direct interactions with beneficiaries significantly influence perceived prosocial impact because employees have an opportunity to see the benefits they brought to others (Grant et al., 2007). Bolino and colleagues (2012) suggested that helpers are attentive to recipient reactions and they consider it as "signaling either the attainment or failure to attain a desired end" (p. 128). Accordingly, receiving gratitude is expected to contribute to helpers' perceived prosocial impact.

Considering the unique relations of proactive and reactive helping with receipt of gratitude, proactive and reactive helping are expected to have differential indirect effects on perceived prosocial impact via receipt of gratitude. We hypothesized a negative relation of proactive helping with receipt of gratitude and a positive relation of receipt of gratitude with perceived prosocial impact, which suggests a negative indirect effect of proactive helping on perceived prosocial impact via receipt of gratitude. In contrast, we hypothesized a positive relation of reactive helping with receipt of gratitude and a positive relation of receipt of gratitude with perceived prosocial impact, which indicates a positive indirect

effect of reactive helping on perceived prosocial impact via receipt of gratitude.

Hypothesis 3a: Helpers' receipt of gratitude will be positively related to next-day perceived prosocial impact.

Hypothesis 3b: Proactive helping will have a negative indirect relation with next-day perceived prosocial impact via receipt of gratitude.

Hypothesis 3c: Reactive helping will have a positive indirect relation with next-day perceived prosocial impact via receipt of gratitude.

Receipt of gratitude and work engagement. In addition to perceived prosocial impact, we expect that receipt of gratitude resulting from helping will also be associated helpers' work engagement. This helping–engagement link is noteworthy for the helping literature because it addresses the question of how the benefits of extrarole helping can fuel engagement in in-role work activities. Our utilization of a eudaimonic perspective of well-being suggests that the receipt of gratitude as a consequence of helping can enhance more general work engagement.

To begin, receipt of gratitude is a signal that helpers successfully interacted with their environment, thereby prompting general feelings of being capable and competent at work. When people feel efficacious and confident, they are more willing to invest time and energy in current activities (Bandura, 1977; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Although self-efficacy is often domain-specific, individual experiences of success in specific instances such as receipt of gratitude may translate into generalized self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) noted that “some kinds of experiences create only limited mastery expectations, while still others instill a more generalized sense of efficacy” (pp. 84–85). Helping coworkers and receiving gratitude may instill generalized experiences of success because they are part of widespread interpersonal and reciprocity processes within organizations (Lawler, 2001). Empirical studies support this notion that gratitude improves helpers' sense of mastery (e.g., Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2009). Thus, we expect that the positive experience of receiving gratitude translates into general efficacy beliefs about making meaningful contributions, thus cultivating broader engagement in helpers at work.

Moreover, receipt of gratitude can satisfy helpers' needs for relatedness. Gratitude, manifested through words of thanks and appreciative action, is highly impactful for those who receive gratitude because of its social and other-oriented nature (Fehr et al., 2017; Grant, 2012; Watkins, 2014). For example, Algoe and colleagues (2013) demonstrated that receipt of gratitude predicts one's relational growth with those who express gratitude. Importantly, helpers' experiences of positive interpersonal relationships fuel their motivation at work (Grant, 2012; Lanaj, Chang, & Johnson, 2012; Lilius, 2012; Ouwenel, Le Blanc, Schaufeli, & van Wijhe, 2012). Thus, receipt of gratitude can lead helpers to become more engaged at work via satisfying helpers' needs for intimacy and genuine relationships (Grant, 2012).

In sum, gratitude signals to helpers a successful interaction with the recipient and that the recipient appreciated and valued their help, thereby satisfying helpers' needs for relatedness and competence. The greater personal resources from receiving gratitude enable employees to invest more of the self in a holistic and

connected manner into their work roles (Fredrickson, 2000; Lilius, 2012). Keeping in mind the proposed relations of helping with gratitude, proactive and reactive helping are expected to have indirect effects on work engagement via receipt of gratitude. We hypothesized a negative relation of proactive helping with receipt of gratitude and a positive relation of receipt of gratitude with work engagement, which suggests a negative indirect effect of proactive helping on work engagement via receipt of gratitude. In contrast, we hypothesized a positive relation of reactive helping with receipt of gratitude and a positive relation of receipt of gratitude with work engagement, thus we expect a positive indirect effect of reactive helping on work engagement via receipt of gratitude.

Hypothesis 4a: Helpers' receipt of gratitude will be positively related to next-day work engagement.

Hypothesis 4b: Proactive helping will have a negative indirect relation with next-day work engagement via receipt of gratitude.

Hypothesis 4c: Reactive helping will have a positive indirect relation with next-day work engagement via receipt of gratitude.

Study 1

Method

We used an experience sampling methodology in Study 1 to capture day-level, within-person variability in our focal variables. Helping tends to be extrarole and requires direct contact with coworkers, which vary across different days. Helpers' time and resource availability to offer help as well as their experience receiving requests for help and actually providing help vary daily (e.g., Glomb et al., 2011; Koopman et al., 2016; Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016; Trougakos, Beal, Cheng, Hideg, & Zweig, 2015). Our other focal variables (receipt of gratitude, perceived prosocial impact, and work engagement) also vary daily (e.g., Lam, Wan, & Roussin, 2016; Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014; Sonnentag, 2003; Sonnentag & Grant, 2012; Sonnentag & Starzyk, 2015; Spence et al., 2014).

We surveyed 54 employees who were enrolled in a part-time, executive MBA-style course at a large university in the U.S. over 10 consecutive workdays. We collected data for two work weeks to ensure we captured sufficient within-person variability (see Spence et al., 2014; Trougakos et al., 2015). Moreover, timeframes longer than two weeks can be onerous for participants (Dimotakis, Ilies, & Judge, 2013). We removed instances of missing responses, unmatched lagged data, and days when employees did not work or did not interact with their coworkers. We obtained usable data from 51 employees with 232 (of a possible 510) daily matched observations, which represents 45.5% of all possible observations. All employees worked full-time and were employed in a variety of industries, including manufacturing (15.7%), government (15.7%), health care (13.7%), and education (9.8%). They represented four age groups, namely 21–30 years (11.8%), 31–40 years (43.1%), 41–50 years (29.4%), and 51–60 years (15.7%). The majority of employees were Caucasian (80.4%), 49.0% were female, they

worked an average of 50.6 hr per week ($SD = 8.7$), and average tenure in their current organization was 9.0 years ($SD = 7.4$).

Data were collected via a series of online surveys. We sent a one-time survey, which contained demographics, to employees approximately one week before the start of the daily surveys. We then collected data for 10 consecutive work days. The daily survey (administered at the end of the workday prior to employees leaving work) assessed their daily helping, receipt of gratitude, perceived prosocial impact, and work engagement. We received approval by the institutional review board of the Michigan State University (IRB# $\times 17-075e$).

Measures. Unless otherwise noted, employees indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item via a 5-point scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Helping. Three items each were adapted from Lee and Allen (2002) to assess daily proactive helping (average daily $\alpha = .88$) and reactive helping (average daily $\alpha = .90$). The items were adapted for daily use, and the order of proactive and reactive helping was randomized daily. The proactive helping items were “Without being asked, today I helped others who had work-related problems,” “Without being asked, today I helped coworkers make progress on their work,” and “Without being asked, today I helped coworkers avoid potential problems with their work.” The reactive helping items were “When my coworkers came to me for help, today I helped them to solve their work-related problems,” “When my coworkers came to me for help, today I helped them to make progress on their work,” and “When my coworkers came to me for help, today I helped them to avoid potential problems with their work.” Participants responded to these items using a 6-point frequency scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *once*, 3 = *two times*, 4 = *three times*, 5 = *four times*, and 6 = *five or more times*).

Receipt of gratitude. We developed three items (average daily $\alpha = .93$) based upon prior research on gratitude feelings and expressions (e.g., Grant & Gino, 2010; Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Tsang, 2006, 2007). Gratitude, “a positive emotion that is experienced when an individual perceives that someone has intentionally given them a valued benefit” (Tsang, 2007, p. 157), has been described and measured using words such as gratefulness and appreciation (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Tsang, 2007). The items we used were “After I provided help today, the recipients expressed gratitude toward me,” “After I provided help today, the recipients showed appreciation toward me,” and “After I provided help today, the recipients expressed positive emotions toward me.”

Perceived prosocial impact. We measured perceived prosocial impact using three items (average daily $\alpha = .93$) adapted from Grant (2008a). The items were “Today my work had a positive impact on my coworkers,” “Today I benefited my coworkers through my work,” and “Today I felt that I had a positive impact on my coworkers through my work.”

Work engagement. Work engagement was assessed using three items (average daily $\alpha = .72$) adapted from Rich and colleagues (2010). The items were “Today I exerted a lot of energy on the job,” “Today I felt positive about my job,” and “Today I was absorbed by the job.”¹

Analytic strategy. Because of the nested nature of our data (days nested within individuals), we tested our hypotheses using multilevel path analysis in Mplus 7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). We controlled for receipt of gratitude, perceived prosocial impact, and work engagement from the prior time, which enabled us to

examine change in these variables (Johnson, Lanaj, & Barnes, 2014). Moreover, we separated the measurement of the focal variables in time. Participants reported their proactive and reactive helping and the gratitude they received on the current day. Our eudaimonic outcomes—perceived prosocial impact and work engagement—were assessed the following workday, which corresponds with the presumed causal order among the variables and alleviates concerns with common method variance (Johnson, Rosen, & Djurdjevic, 2011; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

Our within-person variables were modeled as level-1 variables using random slopes. As recommended by Wang, Liao, Zhan, and Shi (2011), control variables were modeled using fixed slopes. We group-mean-centered the exogenous helping and control variables (Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000; Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010). Centering at each person’s mean removes the variance attributable to the person-level of analysis (Enders & Tofighi, 2007). The estimates using group-mean centering are interpreted as indicating expected levels of outcomes for a person with his or her average levels of predictors.

Results

Presented in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics and correlations among the focal variables. Prior to hypothesis testing, we examined the proportion of within-person variance in the level-1 variables. Substantial proportions of within-person variance existed in receipt of gratitude (44.4%), proactive helping (61.9%), reactive helping (60.6%), next-day prosocial impact (54.1%), and next-day work engagement (54.2%). Sizable portions of within-person variance indicate that the use of multilevel modeling is appropriate. We also conducted a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis to assess the fit of the measurement model. The multilevel five-factor measurement model had acceptable fit, $\chi^2(80) = 208.11$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .08; and SRMR = .06, and it fit better than all the other alternative models in which any two of the factors at the within-person level were combined ($60.99 \leq \Delta \chi^2$ s ($\Delta df = 4$) ≤ 497.55). These findings offer support for the discriminant validity of our focal variables.

Tests of within-person relationships. Illustrated in Figure 2 and reported in Table 2 are the results of our analyses.² Specifically, reactive helping was positively associated with an increase in the receipt of gratitude ($\gamma = .19$, $p < .01$, $se = .06$, 95% CI [.071, .311]), but proactive helping was not associated with change in the receipt of gratitude ($\gamma = -.04$, ns , $SE = .06$, 95% CI

¹ Given our use of a shortened scale, we conducted a pilot study to verify whether it converges with the full scale. We administered the full nine-item scale ($\alpha = .85$) to a separate sample of 97 MBA students. We then created a scale score for our shortened three-item scale ($\alpha = .71$) and correlated it with an overall score based on all nine items. The correlation was .77 ($p < .05$), which suggests that our shortened daily measure is a valid indicator of work engagement.

² We ran supplementary analyses by including prosocial motivation measured on the current day as a control variable. We adapted three items from Grant (2008b; average daily $\alpha = .92$). We included prosocial motivation as a control variable for all outcomes (i.e., receipt of gratitude, next-day perceived prosocial impact, and next-day work engagement), and the results were the same with or without it as a control variable. For brevity, we omitted this control in our final analyses.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for the Focal Variables in Study 1

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Receipt of gratitude	3.85	0.56				
2. Proactive helping	3.02	1.02	.13			
3. Reactive helping	3.20	1.06	.29**	.57**		
4. Next-day prosocial impact	3.97	0.55	.01	.06	-.03	
5. Next-day work engagement	3.86	0.61	.04	.15*	.02	.47**

Note. Level 1 *N* = 232, Level 2 *N* = 51. Correlations for the level 1 variables represent group-mean centered relationships among the daily variables at the within-person level analysis.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

[-.143, .074]). Thus, Hypothesis 2 received support whereas Hypothesis 1 did not.

In support of Hypotheses 3a and 4a, receipt of gratitude was positively related to an increase in next-day perceived prosocial impact ($\gamma = .20, p < .05, SE = .07, 95\% \text{ CI } [.052, .338]$) and an increase in next-day work engagement ($\gamma = .20, p < .05, SE = .08, 95\% \text{ CI } [.044, .346]$).³ Hypotheses 3b, 3c, 4b, and 4c predicted indirect relations of helping with next-day perceived prosocial impact and with next-day work engagement via receipt of gratitude. We followed procedures recommended by Bauer, Preacher, and Gil (2006) to calculate the random indirect effect. Specifically, we used path *a* (IV $\rightarrow$ Mediator, controlling for previous-day variables) and path *b* (Mediator $\rightarrow$ DV, controlling for IV and all other controls) coefficients and their variances and covariance from our analyses. This procedure involved estimating the indirect effect and conducting a Monte Carlo simulation with 20,000 replications to obtain a confidence interval around the indirect effect (Preacher & Selig, 2012). We found that the indirect effect of reactive helping on next-day perceived prosocial impact via receipt of gratitude (path *a*: reactive helping $\rightarrow$ receipt of gratitude, $b = .19, p < .01$; path *b*: receipt of gratitude $\rightarrow$ next-day work engagement, $b = .20, p < .05$) was .038, 95% CI [.007, .079]. The indirect effect of reactive helping on next-day work engagement through receipt of gratitude (path *a*: reactive helping $\rightarrow$ receipt of gratitude, $b = .19, p < .01$; path *b*: receipt of gratitude $\rightarrow$ next-day perceived prosocial impact, $b = .20, p < .05$) was .038, 95% CI [.006, .079]. The indirect relations of proactive helping with these two outcomes were not significant (indirect estimate for perceived prosocial impact: $-.006, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.033, .015]$; indirect estimate for work engagement, $-.006, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.034, .015]$). Thus, results supported Hypotheses 3c and 4c but not Hypotheses 3b and 4b.

Supplemental analyses. Given that we found a nonsignificant relation of proactive helping with receipt of gratitude, we conducted a Wald test of the difference of coefficients to verify that proactive and reactive helping differentially predicted change in helpers' receipt of gratitude. We modeled our within-person variables using fixed slopes to obtain fit statistics for a constrained model in which the estimates for the two helping—gratitude paths were constrained to be equal, and then compared the constrained and unconstrained models. A Wald test supported that the coefficients for proactive helping and reactive helping in predicting gratitude were significantly different, $\Delta\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 5.2, p < .05$. Moreover, the difference in the indirect effects of reactive helping versus proactive helping on next-day perceived prosocial

impact through receipt of gratitude was statistically significant (estimate = .044, 95% CI [.0082, .0989]) and the difference in the indirect effects of reactive helping versus proactive helping on next-day work engagement through receipt of gratitude was also statistically significant (estimate = .044, 95% CI [.0077, .0996]). These findings indicate that, compared with proactive helping, reactive helping is more strongly related to next-day perceived prosocial impact and next-day work engagement via receipt of gratitude.

Discussion

In Study 1, we demonstrated that helpers' receipt of gratitude plays a pivotal role linking helping behavior to their eudaimonic well-being. However, our study is limited in that it is still unclear why the two different circumstances of helping have differential relations with helpers' receipt of gratitude. Importantly, we theorized that proactive and reactive helping differ with regard to the psychological experiences of helpers (e.g., clearer grasp of the help needed) and recipients (e.g., threats to their competence, self-esteem, and autonomy). These potential mechanisms that explain why helping leads to receipt of gratitude were not examined, leaving open questions about our conceptual explanations for the hypothesized relations. Moreover, the Study 1 data were collected using a diary study that may have muddled effects across multiple help episodes. Within a day, multiple events of helping exchanges can occur yet we did not capture the level of receipt of gratitude for each proactive and reactive helping event. We therefore used an event-based approach in this study to test receipt of gratitude as an outcome of discrete proactive and reactive helping events.

Study 2

To provide further insight into how and why receipt of gratitude is differentially impacted by reactive and proactive helping, we examine the mechanisms we previously theorized about. Importantly, we collected data from both helpers and recipients. Doing so gave us an opportunity to replicate our helping—gratitude findings from Study 1 and a more in-depth look at the psychological experiences of helpers and recipients when help is offered and gratitude is expressed, thereby improving our theoretical precision. If our prior theorizing is correct, from a helper perspective, we expect that helpers will report greater (a) clarity of their provision of help and (b) understanding of help recipients' needs and problems when providing reactive (vs. proactive) help. From a recipient perspective, we expect that help recipients will report greater threats to their (a) self-esteem, (b) competence, and (c) autonomy in response to proactive (vs. reactive) helping. Recipients are also expected to report greater (a) need for help and (b) perception of help effectiveness in regards to reactive (vs. proactive) helping.

Method

Participants and Procedures. We used a critical incident technique to examine our set of predictions about the proposed mechanisms underlying receipt of gratitude and expressions of

³ The pattern and significance of results were comparable when we used current-day perceived prosocial impact and work engagement as outcomes.

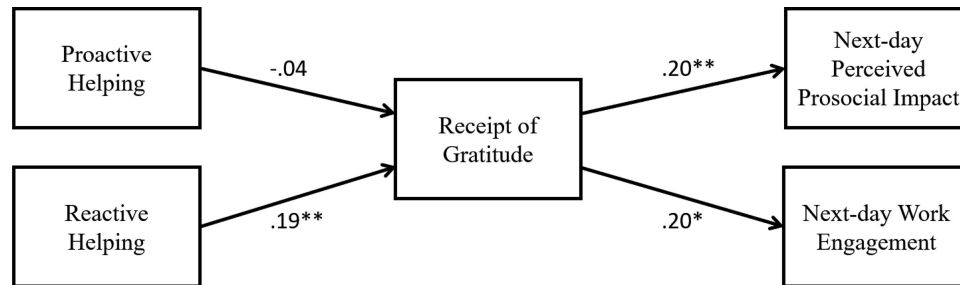


Figure 2. Within-person results from the test of our proposed model (Study 1). Level 1 $N = 232$, Level 2 $N = 51$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. For clarity of presentation, control variables are omitted from the figure. We controlled for levels of the IVs, mediators, and outcomes from the previous day ($t - 1$). Thus, the focal variables in our model represent change in receipt of gratitude, perceived prosocial impact, and work engagement. Moreover, the direct effects of the distally positioned variables are included in our analyses (e.g., the effects of both helping are included to test the indirect effects of helping on next-day perceived prosocial impact and next-day work engagement; see Table 2 for more details).

gratitude in response to helping. Our use of a general survey in Study 1 makes it difficult to examine the psychological experiences of participants specific to proactive helping and reactive helping because of complexity in the real-world workplace and the occurrence of multiple events during a day. The use of a critical incident technique allows participants to recall contextual details of a specific event (e.g., details associated with giving or receiving help), thereby being effective in capturing individuals' perceptions of and reactions to a situation (e.g., Mitchell, Vogel, & Folger, 2015). Given our distinction between different circumstances in which helping occurs, recalling a situation where proactive or reactive helping was enacted helps us to tap into the psychological experiences of helpers and recipients specially targeted to proactive helping and reactive helping.

Using the same procedure, we collected data from separate samples to assess the experiences of helpers and recipients. Employees were instructed to recall recent helping events at work where they provided (Sample 1) and received (Sample 2) proactive and reactive helping. Examples of proactive and reactive helping were provided by adapting the items used in Study 1. After recalling the event, participants wrote about their thoughts and feelings regarding the specific helping event and how the help recipient responded to them as a help giver (Sample 1) or how they responded to the helper as a help recipient (Sample 2). Each employee was assigned to proactive and reactive helping conditions (the order was randomized across employees). After describing the helping event, employees reported their experience of the event, once for proactive helping and once for reactive helping.

Table 2
Multilevel Regression Results From Study 1

Variable	Dependent variables		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Receipt of gratitude (t)	Prosocial impact ($t + 1$)	Work engagement ($t + 1$)
Level 1			
Intercept	3.83 (0.08)**	3.20 (0.28)**	3.07 (0.29)**
Proactive helping ($t - 1$)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)
Reactive helping ($t - 1$)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.06)
Receipt of gratitude ($t - 1$)	0.00 (0.08)	0.08 (0.09)	0.09 (0.09)
Perceived prosocial impact (t)		0.05 (0.11)	-0.20 (0.12)
Work engagement (t)		0.03 (0.09)	0.08 (0.10)
Proactive helping (t)	-0.04 (0.06)	0.06 (0.05)	0.15 (0.06)**
Reactive helping (t)	0.19 (0.06)**	-0.09 (0.05)	-0.10 (0.06)
Receipt of gratitude (t)		0.20 (0.07)**	0.20 (0.08)*
Variance explained	0.03	0.28	0.23

Note. Values in parentheses are standard errors; entries are unstandardized coefficients. We controlled for previous-day ($t - 1$) variables for all analyses to provide conservative estimates of our analyses. However, the results were consistent with or without them as controls. Variance explained (i.e., Pseudo R^2 ; Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998; Singer, 1998) indicates percentage of the total variance in the dependent variable uniquely explained by the focal predictor variables in the model (i.e., proactive helping and reactive helping in Model 1 and receipt of gratitude in Models 2 and 3).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

We recruited two separate samples using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011) to capture the helper's perspective (Sample 1) and the recipient's perspective (Sample 2). For Sample 1, we initially recruited 400 full-time employees in North America. We examined whether these employees received more gratitude in response to reactive (vs. proactive) helping, and whether they perceived greater clarity in the problems they dealt with and greater understanding about help recipients' needs and problems when they provided reactive (vs. proactive) helping. For Sample 2, we initially recruited 250 full-time employees in North America. We examined whether these employees expressed greater levels of gratitude in response to reactive (vs. proactive) helping, and whether they reported greater threats to self-esteem, competence, and autonomy and felt that the help was needed more and more effective when they received reactive (vs. proactive) helping. Respondents received \$4 USD in exchange for their participation.

We removed employees who failed the attention-check items, who had missing responses, or whose descriptions lacked sufficient information to categorize as proactive or reactive.⁴ We also dropped cases where coders' categorizations of proactive and reactive help were discrepant from one another and one other employee from Sample 2 who spent less than five minutes on the survey (see Lee, Choi, & Kim, 2018; Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009), resulting in final samples of 294 employees in Sample 1 and 189 employees in Sample 2.

The final sample demographics were as follows: for Samples 1 and 2, 44.9% and 41.3% were female, respectively, 85% and 79.4% were Caucasian, respectively, and 72.1% and 76.7% were between 20 and 39 years old, respectively. On average, they worked in their current organization for 6.07 years ($SD = 5.01$) and 6.47 years ($SD = 6.31$), respectively. Employees from Samples 1 and 2 were employed in a variety of industries, including retail (18.4% and 14.8%, respectively), health care (9.9% and 12.7%, respectively), manufacturing (7.1% and 10.6%, respectively), education (9.9% and 10.1%, respectively), communications (6.8% and 9.5%, respectively), and banking/finance (10.9% and 10.1%, respectively).

Measures. Unless otherwise indicated, all responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *a very small amount* to 5 = *a very large amount*.

Receipt of gratitude (from a helper's perspective). We used the same three-item scale ($\alpha = .96$ for proactive helping; $\alpha = .94$ for reactive helping) as in Study 1 to assess receipt of gratitude.

Perceived clarity (from a helper's perspective). We measured the degree to which helpers had a clear understanding of the help event and what the help recipient's problems and issues were. First, we adapted 5 items ($\alpha = .86$ and $.85$ for proactive and reactive helping) from Sawyer (1992) to measure helpers' clarity of their provision of help. We asked how clear they were about the following aspects of their provision of help using a 5-point response scale (from 1 = *very unclear* to 5 = *very clear*): (a) the goals and objectives, (b) my expertise, skill, and experience, (c) my responsibilities and duties, (d) the expected results, and (e) the aspects of the help that will benefit the recipient. Second, we adapted three items ($\alpha = .88$ and $.87$ for proactive and reactive helping) from Meece, Blumenfeld, and Hoyle (1988) to measure helpers' understanding of the help recipient's needs and problems. The items are "I understood the help recipient's problems," "I

understood the help recipient's needs," and "I understood what the help recipient wanted for help." Employees responded to these items using a 5-point response scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Expressions of gratitude (from a recipient's perspective). The same three-item scale ($\alpha = .97$ for receipt of proactive helping and $\alpha = .86$ for receipt of reactive helping) used in Study 1 was adapted to measure recipients' expressions of gratitude (e.g., "I expressed gratitude toward the helper").

Need for help (from a recipient's perspective). We asked a single-item question about how much recipients needed the help.

Help effectiveness (from a recipient's perspective). We asked a single-item question about how effective the help was using a 5-point response scale (from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very effective*).

Threats to self-esteem, competence, and autonomy (from a recipient's perspective). We asked three single-item questions about how much the recipients perceived the provided help as threatening to their self-esteem, competence, and autonomy. We provided the definitions of self-esteem (i.e., how much you value yourself), competence (i.e., your sense of confidence to influence outcomes and achieve your goals), and autonomy (i.e., your desire to decide your own behaviors and choose behaviors consistent with your sense of self) to ensure correct understanding of each potential threat.

Results

From the helper's perspective (Sample 1). A repeated-measures ANOVA indicated a significant effect of helping condition on the amount of helper's receipt of gratitude, Wilks' $\lambda = .99$, $F(1, 293) = 3.84$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .013$. A post hoc test using a Bonferroni correction confirmed that recalling provision of reactive (vs. proactive) help produced higher receipt of gratitude (for reactive help, $M = 4.35$, $SD = .73$; for proactive help, $M = 4.25$, $SD = .84$). Thus, we replicated our Study 1 finding that proactive and reactive helping have differential effects on receipt of gratitude.

A series of repeated-measures ANOVAs revealed significant effects of helping condition on helper's clarity of their provision of help, Wilks' $\lambda = .98$, $F(1, 293) = 5.01$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .017$, and their understanding of the recipient's problems and needs, Wilks' $\lambda = .94$, $F(1, 293) = 19.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .062$. Post hoc tests using a Bonferroni correction confirmed that recalling provision of reactive (vs. proactive) help had higher clarity of their provision of help (for reactive help, $M = 4.35$, $SD = .55$; for proactive help, $M = 4.28$, $SD = .60$), and understanding of the help recipient's problems and needs (for reactive help, $M = 4.48$, $SD = .57$; for proactive help, $M = 4.32$, $SD = .68$). These differences were all statistically significant at $p < .05$.

⁴ We removed 43 employees from Sample 1 and 32 employees from Sample 2. Of the remaining 714 helping events from 357 individuals from a helper's perspective, the interrater agreement was 90.1%. Of the remaining 436 helping events from 218 individuals from a recipient's perspective, the interrater agreement was 92.9%. To verify that employees' written descriptions accurately reflected proactive and reactive helping events, two coders who were blind to the conditions independently rated each description. On the basis of the definitions of proactive and reactive helping provided above, the coders categorized each description as either proactive, reactive, or insufficient/unable to tell.

From the recipient's perspective (Sample 2). To assess the effects of the helping condition, we conducted a one-way repeated-measures analyses of variance (ANOVA). Results indicated a significant effect of helping condition on the amount of gratitude expressed toward the helper, Wilks' $\lambda = .80$, $F(1, 188) = 46.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .20$. A post hoc test using a Bonferroni correction revealed that recalling reactive help ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .50$) led to higher reports of expressed gratitude than recalling proactive help ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.13$), a difference that was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Thus, proactive and reactive helping have differential effects on recipients' expressions of gratitude. These results are consistent with the conclusions of Study 1.

Furthermore, consistent with our predictions, a series of repeated-measures ANOVAs revealed significant effects of helping condition on threat to self-esteem, Wilks' $\lambda = .95$, $F(1, 188) = 11.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$, threat to competence, Wilks' $\lambda = .94$, $F(1, 188) = 12.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$, threat to autonomy, Wilks' $\lambda = .86$, $F(1, 188) = 29.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$, need for help, Wilks' $\lambda = .71$, $F(1, 188) = 78.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$, and help effectiveness, Wilks' $\lambda = .82$, $F(1, 188) = 41.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$. Post hoc tests using a Bonferroni correction also supported that recalling proactive (vs. reactive) help resulted in greater threats to recipients' self-esteem (for reactive help, $M = 1.39$, $SD = .86$; for proactive help, $M = 1.65$, $SD = 1.08$), competence (for reactive help, $M = 1.48$, $SD = .97$; for proactive help, $M = 1.79$, $SD = 1.18$), and autonomy (for reactive help, $M = 1.26$, $SD = .66$; for proactive help, $M = 1.74$, $SD = 1.14$). Moreover, recipients of reactive (vs. proactive) helping reported greater need for help (for reactive help, $M = 3.91$, $SD = .89$; for proactive help, $M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.41$), and greater help effectiveness (for reactive help, $M = 4.28$, $SD = .82$; for proactive help, $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.45$). These differences were all statistically significant at $p < .001$.⁵

Supplemental analyses. Besides replicating our findings from Study 1 and testing the mechanisms underlying gratitude, we conducted some additional analyses. First, we assumed that gratitude is shaped by the context in which help is provided (i.e., in response to a request or not) as opposed to differences in helper motives. Different motives, however, might fuel reactive and proactive helping. For example, Spitzmuller and Van Dyne (2013, p. 565) noted that "[r]eactive helping behaviors are performed in response to the needs of others and in response to prior positive treatment provided by colleagues, supervisors, or the organization as a whole. Conversely, proactive helping behaviors originate from within the helper on the basis of active efforts to satisfy personal needs." This description confounds the helping context (i.e., in response to a request or not) with helpers' motives (i.e., a concern for others and a concern for personal need satisfaction). However, our conceptualization of proactive versus reactive helping is strictly about differences in the circumstances (not motives) regarding the help.

To verify that our observed findings owe to the helping context and not helper motives, we tested whether helpers in Sample 1 report different motives when providing reactive versus proactive helping. Based on Spitzmuller and Van Dyne's (2013) logic, other-concern motives should be higher for reactive help whereas intrinsic motivation (an outcome of personal need satisfaction) should be higher for proactive help. We adapted two items from De Dreu and Nauta (2009) to measure other-concern motives ($\alpha =$

.80 and .84 for proactive and reactive help; e.g., "I helped because I was concerned about the help recipient's needs and interests"), and three items from Grant (2008b) to measure intrinsic motivation ($\alpha = .88$ and .90 for proactive and reactive help; e.g., "I enjoyed helping itself"). A series of repeated-measures ANOVAs revealed nonsignificant effects of helping condition on other-concern, Wilks' $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 293) = 0.56$, $p = .81$, $\eta^2 = .000$, and intrinsic motivation, Wilks' $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 293) = 1.107$, $p = .29$, $\eta^2 = .004$.⁶ In addition, supplemental analyses with our Study 1 data revealed that helpers' daily prosocial motivation was unrelated to both reactive helping ($r = .04$, *ns*) and proactive helping ($r = .05$, *ns*). Taken together, these results suggest that helper motives do not explain the differences in gratitude across our two studies.

Second, in Sample 1 (the helper's perspective), we tested whether receipt of gratitude mediates the effect of helping condition on helper's perceived prosocial impact. We adapted the perceived prosocial impact items from Study 1 so that the items referred to the specific helping event recalled ($\alpha = .89$ and .87 for proactive and reactive help; e.g., "After I provided help, I felt that my work had the positive impact on the help recipient."). The indirect effect of reactive (vs. proactive) helping on perceived prosocial impact through receipt of gratitude (path *a*: reactive (vs. proactive) help $\rightarrow$ receipt of gratitude, $b = .10$, $p < .05$; path *b*: receipt of gratitude $\rightarrow$ perceived prosocial impact, $b = .41$, $p < .01$) was .0409, 95% CI [.0005, .0869]. Only the indirect effect was significant; helping condition did not have a direct effect on prosocial impact ($b = .03$, *ns*). This finding indicates that reactive (vs. proactive) helping is more strongly related to helper's perceived prosocial impact via receipt of gratitude.

General Discussion

Results from two studies confirmed that receipt of gratitude is a novel mechanism that links helping behavior to helper's well-being. Unlike prior research that considered outcomes for helpers without taking recipients' reactions into account, we show that receipt of gratitude from recipients plays a key role because whether helpers receive gratitude or not makes a difference for their eudaimonic well-being. In doing so, our study highlights the social exchange process of giving help and receiving gratitude as key determinants of helpers' well-being. Our research makes several contributions to the helping literature.

⁵ We also tested indirect effects of the helping conditions (proactive = 1 vs. reactive = 0) on expressed gratitude via threats to self-esteem, competence, and autonomy, separately for each path. All three indirect relations were significant: via threat to self-esteem = $-.129$, 95% CI $[-.247, -.042]$; via threat to competence = $-.132$, 95% CI $[-.246, -.047]$; and via threat to autonomy = $-.246$, 95% CI $[-.377, -.138]$.

⁶ Moreover, an independent coder blind to our study read the descriptions of helping events (588 events from 294 employees) and identified whether each helping event was motivated by other-orientation (if yes = 1, if no = 0) and intrinsic motivation (if yes = 1, if no = 0). Ratings did not differ significantly across the help conditions for other-orientation motive (87.8% and 83.7% for proactive and reactive help) nor for intrinsic motivation (87.1% and 81.6% for proactive and reactive help).

Theoretical Implications

First, we highlight the need to distinguish between proactive and reactive helping based on the unique indirect relations that each has with eudaimonic well-being via receipt of gratitude. Although the importance of this distinction has been noted previously (e.g., Bolino & Grant, 2016; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Spitzmuller & Van Dyne, 2013), empirical research that speaks to the discriminant and predictive validity of proactive vis-à-vis reactive helping is scarce. Our findings demonstrated that proactive and reactive helping differentially predicted changes in helpers' receipt of gratitude and subsequent well-being. These findings were replicated in Study 2 using an experimental design from both the helper's and the recipient's perspectives. The combined results from Studies 1 and 2 reveal that proactive helping carries a possible risk that recipients may regard such help as unneeded, less effective, and threatening to their self-esteem, competence, and autonomy, thereby reducing expressions of gratitude and any gains in helpers' well-being. Although the extant literature generally emphasizes the positive consequences of proactive behaviors (e.g., Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Thompson, 2005; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000), we highlight one instance where reactive behavior appears more beneficial than proactive behavior for both the helper and the recipient. To our knowledge, ours is the first empirical comparison of proactive and reactive helping, which reveals an advantage of reactive helping over proactive helping.

Moreover, our research adds to recent findings of potential downsides of prosocial actions by taking recipients' responses into account and by considering the short term consequences of proactive helping (see Bolino & Grant, 2016; Bolino, Hsiung, Harvey, & LePine, 2015; Fay & Hüttges, 2017). Although prior research has considered detrimental effects of helping on helpers, relatively little attention has been paid to potential downsides of proactive helping specifically, such as eliciting less favorable reactions from recipients. For example, Bolino and colleagues (Bolino et al., 2004, 2012, 2015; Bolino & Turnley, 2005) identified various challenges associated with enacting citizenship behaviors. In their framework, such behaviors entail various personal costs, including role overload, role conflict, and stress (e.g., Bolino & Turnley, 2005). However, detrimental reactions by recipients received little attention in their framework. We add to this stream of research by demonstrating that proactive helping is not effective for eliciting gratitude from recipients whereas reactive helping is, thereby improving helpers' well-being.

Our research also contributes to understanding the downsides of proactivity in more dynamic and shorter time frames. Prior research has examined the negative implications of proactive behavior with longer time lags (e.g., accumulation of citizenship fatigue or mental depletion across multiple weeks or months; Bolino et al., 2015; Lin & Johnson, 2015). Our study addresses the important micro dynamics and exchanges between helpers and help recipients as a mechanism through which helping behavior may have implications for helpers' well-being. These micro dynamics may help account for longer-term effects observed in prior research, such that pro-social behavior over a long time without receiving gratitude may trigger fatigue on the part of helpers.

Given mixed findings of benefits and downsides of proactivity in the literature, it is intriguing to ask "Under what conditions is proactive helping appreciated by recipients?" For example, Grant,

Parker, and Collins (2009) highlighted the importance for actors to show their prosocial values and positive affect in order to elicit favorable reactions from others. However, it is also important to consider recipients' characteristics that may influence their willingness to accept and appreciate proactive behaviors. Our study suggests that proactive helping is potentially threatening to recipients' self-esteem, confidence, and autonomy and is less effective in meeting recipients' needs. However, recipients likely vary in what they value and the degree to which they feel threatened by proactive actions. For example, those high in agreeableness may express comparable levels of gratitude toward reactive versus proactive help because such individuals value the beneficiary intentions of others and have more favorable attitudes toward others approaching them (McCullough, Tsang, & Emmons, 2004). Similarly, Grant and colleagues (2009) noted that recipients' beliefs about the value of proactive behaviors may influence whether proactive actions are viewed positively or not. The external environment also plays a role in shaping recipients' reactions to proactive behavior. For example, when the situation is uncertain and employees do not have a clear understanding of what they need to do, they are more likely to appreciate others who proactively explain what is expected of them and provide assistance (Grant et al., 2009). For a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits and downsides of proactive helping, further research on the boundary conditions of the effects of proactive helping is needed.

Our examination of gratitude also helps identify novel antecedents of prosocial impact and work engagement. Prior studies have focused primarily on job characteristics (e.g., task significance) and beneficiary contact as predictors of perceived prosocial impact (Bellé, 2013; Grant, 2007), and situational and individual characteristics as antecedents of work engagement (Christian et al., 2011; Rich et al., 2010). Yet, as we show, through episodic exchanges of helping and gratitude, employees can cultivate perceived prosocial impact and work engagement by providing helping when it is requested. This finding helps address Bolino and Grant's (2016, p. 646) concern that "little research has addressed how employees take initiative from the bottom-up to change their own perceptions of prosocial impact." By acting in ways that elicit gratitude from others, employees can leverage these reactions to their provision of help to bolster their own perceived prosocial impact and work engagement.

Our investigation of prosocial impact and work engagement as eudaimonic well-being outcomes adds to the literature on helping outcomes for helpers. Our results show that the positive exchange of giving help and receiving gratitude benefits helpers by promoting the expression of the self in both social (i.e., prosocial impact) and achievement (i.e., work engagement) domains. Our findings add to the existing literature on daily consequences of helping for helpers, which has predominantly focused on hedonic aspects of well-being (e.g., positive mood, satisfaction; Glomb et al., 2011; Koopman et al., 2016). However, theoretical and empirical work reveals the distinctiveness of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (e.g., Compton, Smith, Cornish, & Qualls, 1996; McGregor & Little, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Going beyond a hedonic view of well-being that focuses on happiness as the end goal, our extension to eudaimonic well-being contributes to knowledge of how individuals thrive and flourish by the realization of their potential in achievement and social domains at work (Hayward & Taylor, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Tomer, 2011).

Finally, it is noteworthy that we find the benefits of helping for helpers have delayed effects on next-day well-being outcomes via receipt of gratitude (results were consistent for current-day and next-day well-being). Although our supplemental analyses suggest a more instantaneous effect can be observed the same day, in line with our theorizing and in support of the importance of the delayed effect, we found support for a lagged association of helping and gratitude with next day well-being. An incubation period and the consolidation effects of sleep on memory may prove helpful for helpers to fully appreciate the receipt of gratitude from others in response to their helping behavior (Fenn & Hambrick, 2013; Karni et al., 1994). Interestingly, a cursory look at our data shows that previous-day ($t - 1$) helping and receipt of gratitude did not have significant relations with next-day well-being ($t + 1$; see Table 2), which indicates that helping– and gratitude–outcome relations did not sustain beyond two days. Thus, our findings suggest that these effects, although slightly delayed in its full onset, may be temporally restricted. However, it remains unclear, both theoretically and empirically, how and why such effects may not carry over more than one day. We call for future studies to further explore temporal issues regarding the effects of helping.

Practical Implications

Our study also has applied implications for different stakeholders involved in the social exchange process of giving help and receiving gratitude. With respect to help recipients, our results demonstrate the importance of showing appreciation when help is provided. Help recipients should be aware that helping can be taxing for helpers and carries personal costs (e.g., slowed progress on helpers' own tasks and depletion; Koopman et al., 2016; Lanaj et al., 2016). Recipients' expressions of gratitude can, however, offset these challenges and create downstream benefits by boosting helpers' eudaimonic well-being.

With respect to helpers, our results suggest a reconsideration of the role of proactive behaviors due to their potential disadvantages in receiving gratitude. Specifically, we found that helpers receive more gratitude in response to reactive (vs. proactive) helping. Thus, for helpers to receive gratitude, it may be best for them to focus on their own work and only jump in to provide help when requested by others. Having said that, it is important to ensure that other employees will seek help when needed, thus potential helpers must make themselves more approachable and communicate they are open to helping others. As for proactive helping, our study suggests that in some instances it may be appreciated less by recipients, especially when proactive behaviors involve pointing out others' mistakes or problems (cf. Lin & Johnson, 2015). Thus, when providing proactive helping, helpers need to be careful with the way such help is delivered. For example, helping coworkers discover the means for arriving at the solution instead of giving them the solution and/or showing respect and empathy for coworkers' problems may mitigate the perceived threats of proactive helping.

Finally, for managers who seek to promote the positive experiences of helping exchanges at work, our research suggests that expressions of gratitude should be encouraged to keep employees highly motivated and engaged. Through organizational initiatives or by creating norms for gratitude, organizations may be able to influence employees to express more gratitude when helped (Fehr

et al., 2017). Specific training and socialization programs may be enacted to establish the importance of expressing gratitude and to help employees better demonstrate and interpret gratitude. A reward or peer recognition system could be implemented as a means for expressing gratitude publicly and to recognize and reward helpers for the prosocial impact of their helping.

Limitations

Despite the strengths of our studies (e.g., use of experience sampling and experimental methods, time lagged variables, controlling for prior levels of the outcomes), we acknowledge some limitations that can be redressed by future research. First, we did not control for the criticality of the tasks that individuals provided help on. It may be that if a task is more critical to the success of their job, then help recipients may express more gratitude to helpers than when help is provided on superfluous tasks. It may also be that individuals will seek help more often for tasks that are critical or especially important to success than for tasks that are less important. Thus, it follows that individuals may receive more reactive help for critical tasks versus trying to problem solve on their own or waiting for assistance from others on less critical tasks. If so, then differences in gratitude may emerge because of differences in task criticality rather than reactive versus proactive help per se. It is also possible that proactive and reactive helping may differ in what types of relationships each helping is predominantly associated with (e.g., task-based relationships vs. friendship; Matusik et al., *in press*). Future research is needed to determine whether type of help covaries with other circumstances surrounding the help (e.g., task criticality and relational characteristics).

Second, we acknowledge methodological limitations with Study 2. To begin, we used single items to capture employees' psychological experiences (e.g., threats to their self-esteem, competence, and autonomy). We did so to minimize survey length and respondent fatigue. Although Robins, Hendin, and Trzesniewski (2001) found that a single-item measure can have high convergent validity with the full-item scale, single-item measures are nevertheless potentially problematic. Also, the recall tasks used in Study 2 may be subject to memory, self-serving, and consistency biases (Kunda, 1990), which raises concerns regarding the robustness of our findings. However, the fact that our findings were consistent across two studies using unique methods and perspectives (e.g., helpers vs. recipients) alleviates these concerns to some degree. Further research is therefore needed to tease apart the psychological mechanisms that underlie the effects of proactive and reactive helping on receipt of gratitude, which would complement our findings from Study 2.

Third, although we position work engagement as an indicator of eudaimonic well-being in the achievement domain, the extant literature has conflicting opinions about this. On the one hand, Kahn (1990) described work engagement in eudaimonic terms by referring to it as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and active, full performances" (p. 700). Also, empirical studies have utilized engagement as an indicator of eudaimonic well-being (see Huta & Waterman, 2014). On the other hand, the work engagement measures used in our research

may not fully capture the eudaimonic nature of it. For example, the most common measures (e.g., Christian et al., 2011; Rich et al., 2010) focus more on the self-employment (e.g., effort and attention) rather than the self-expression (e.g., self in role) aspect of engagement. Moreover, our use of a shortened scale raises further questions about the degree which our operationalization of engagement captures its eudaimonic nature. Given the relatively scarce research explicitly theorizing and empirically testing eudaimonic well-being outcomes in the organizational psychology and management literatures, we call for further research that provides greater theoretical and empirical precision regarding how eudaimonic well-being is defined and operationalized.

Finally, our research operates under the assumption that positive exchanges between helpers and recipients fuel the benefits for helpers. However, we acknowledge that the benefits of helping exchanges for helpers may not always be prosocially driven. Rather, helpers may engage in helping for their own self-interest and they may gain benefits and/or be replenished by fulfilling their self-serving and instrumental needs (e.g., impression management, sense of superiority; Kim, Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Johnson, 2013; Spitzmuller & Van Dyne, 2013). For example, research has shown that helping was positively associated with helpers' own well-being and positive affect when helpers had autonomous versus controlled motivation for their helping acts (e.g., Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Thus, it is possible that helpers may be motivated to engage in helping because such acts fit with their own intrinsic values, regardless of whether they receive gratitude or not.

Conclusion

The importance of gratitude has long been recognized as a key factor for individuals to thrive and flourish, but helper-centric research to date has not yet considered the role of gratitude in linking helping with helpers' well-being. To address this, we investigated how helping benefits helpers by cultivating positive experiences of perceived prosocial impact and work engagement through the receipt of gratitude. More telling, we found that receipt of gratitude was more likely to be elicited by reactive (vs. proactive) helping, thereby pointing out the criticality of distinguishing between the different circumstances in which help is provided. It is our hope that future research will identify personal or situational factors that moderate the likelihood of reactive and proactive helping leading to receipt of gratitude and examine the various benefits of gratitude for individual and organizational success. In so doing, we may reach a better understanding of how to create a grateful workplace where individuals can truly flourish and thrive.

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